

5 August 1981
MAU-1056

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, FBIS
THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group
SUBJECT : Monthly Report - Austrian Bureau - July 1981

I. GENERAL

The U.S. dollar's continued rise and strength in July against the Austrian schilling and West German mark enabled the bureau to project major savings in its revised projections for the next, 1982 fiscal year, down by nearly 24 percent or \$417,000 less than projected as recently as December 1979, when the exchange rate was only AS12.5 to \$1.00. The July rate was AS17.00 to \$1.00 or higher every day except 1 July, when it was AS16.89 to \$1.00, and is back to the favorable levels of 6 years ago, 1975. Local and European commentators continue to explain the strength mainly on the basis of high U.S. interest rates. The strong dollar sharply affected the pay of FSN employees, who found that promotions and step increases gave them more schillings but fewer dollars-equivalent than they received before their steps "up." Staff allowances, living quarters allowance and TLA/per diem all continued to drop. Some Embassy contacts expect Vienna soon will lose the rest of its post or COLA allowance, now down to the 10 percent class.

"Favorable" news was reported on bureau efforts to improve the primary communications channel by joining into a new, high-speed, wide-band Embassy channel from Vienna directly to Washington, rather than use Autodin Mode V channels involving leased commercial links with Pirmasens ASC in Germany. This would be in lieu of a previously expected Skylink satellite channel once proposed for 1984. Early message exchanges indicated the changeover would not occur until about 1 October 1981, because the Austrian Post and Telegraph system will not have a new pair of lines until then for parallel bureau operation through the Embassy and on the old Autodin channel.

The Embassy Personnel Officer submitted to State the bureau's complete set of new position descriptions for all FSN personnel on 8 July, after a detailed 2 1/2-month study, commenting that she felt "an honest and thorough job has been done in setting forth the responsibilities of each position." The Vienna FBIS position descriptions also were being studied by State's Regional Personnel Officer Anna Meek in preparation for her impending classification visit to Nicosia Embassy, including classification of the FBIS Nicosia Bureau FSN positions.

No security clearances have been received yet for four Polish monitor and one Serbo-Croatian/Russian monitor applicants whose files were submitted; the Embassy Regional Security Office has been very short-handed because of major personnel turnover in July. The bureau requested London Bureau's assistance in finding more Serbo-Croatian candidates by advertising and testing, because of the small number of Vienna responses. The bureau received one inquiry from Belgrade itself--a Yugoslav wife married to a native Austrian who is soon slated to move to Vienna permanently--and hopes to test her also.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. The bureau was heavily involved in coverage of the special Polish party congress 13-21 July, with local Polish press processing up nearly 50 percent to some 79,000 words, constant special feeds on the normal VCVC channel plus a booked phone line for BBC's continual use on Warsaw throughout the congress, as well as nonstop backup tape recordings of Warsaw I radio throughout. Expressions of appreciation from Chief, Operations Group, to London and Vienna for continuing coverage of Poland's crisis were well received by the bureau's two-man Polish team. There is ample evidence in Vienna of Polish anxiety, with the number of Polish refugees arriving in Austria rising to 200 per day in July, an increase by 14 times over the previous year. Polish autos are seen much more frequently now on Vienna's streets. The bureau offered the U.S. Consulate names & addresses of several Polish monitor applicants who might qualify as interpreters to help the Consulate and INS process a large number of Polish refugee visa applications, after inquiries from Charge d'Affaires Sol Polansky.

2. A TDY visit to American Embassy Belgrade by the bureau chief on 30 June yielded three main results: 1) the Political Section emphasized the "extremely high" value it now places on the FBIS videorecording and playback capability, 2) current FBIS Vienna video selection requirements were passed to the Political Counselor by pouch, and 3) the new Belgrade contractor was briefed and checked out on equipment operation, and a system clarified for Vienna copying for the Embassy of any high-interest Belgrade cassettes without delaying pouching to Vienna for processing. Yugoslav video cassette requests continue to far outshine others, with 15 in July, or three times as many as Prague, Budapest, and Vienna combined.

3. Austrian radio, press and television coverage, which normally produces few "flash" items, was unusually busy in July, with numerous flaps and incidents ranging from the 7 July crash of a

Hungarian air force jet fighter that intruded into Austria's air space, a major and ongoing argument with Czechoslovakia over a Dr. Hodic, who proved to be a Czech spy infiltrating Austria-based "Charter 77" refugee groups and had been granted Austrian citizenship, to a short-lived occupation of Iran's Embassy in Vienna on 24 July including shooting, injuries and arrests, and the arrest on 29 July of two PLO terrorists with suitcases full of machineguns, grenades, etc. who were given swift trials and slated for fast expulsion. Austrian TV continues to yield 2-3 video requests per month; it was not regularly covered previously.

B. Communications

Bureau-logged outages on Mode V Autodin totaled 15:17 in July, with only 150 words filed by London Bureau on the VCVC backup, but a serious outage on 31 July that knocked out simultaneously both Autodin and VCVC channels resulted in the first known use in 6 years of the Telex backup to file 4 priority items (previous uses have been only immediate service messages). On 21 July Vienna operators relayed Priority traffic from London Bureau into Autodin after an extended London outage. A low operator error rate of 1.94 percent earned Vienna communicators still another Pirmasens performance certificate.

C. Technical

Unusually severe summer weather, so-called "100 years weather" the worst since 1957, including heavy rains, floods, and thunderstorms, caused poor reception for BBC even on normally stable Budapest and Zagreb FM transmitters and required use of medium-wave alternates in late July. On 17 July two nearly new high-frequency multicouplers serving the phased loop antenna were put out of action, apparently because of nearby lightning strikes, and older TRG multicouplers were patched in and the damaged units sent to Headquarters for study and repair. BBC's Lanier cassette recorders used on the remote VCVC channel began experiencing a high rate of breakdown and pouching for repair.

III. ADMINISTRATION

A. Personnel

1. Promotions to GS-12 for editor [] and electronics specialist [] were announced on 15 July, along with presentation of federal service pins to several employees. Albanian monitor-trainee [] was promoted to journeyman monitor FSN-3/1 on 26 July.

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2. Staff personnel turnover began with the PCS departure on 18 July of senior editor [redacted] and the 19 July arrival of editor [redacted] and a month-end shuffling of staff housing began, which will accommodate all staff changes this summer with minimal hotel stays and TLA.

IV. VISITS

To the bureau: Headquarters East European specialist [redacted] was given a bureau orientation on 14 July. From the bureau: the bureau chief visited AmEmbassy Belgrade 30 June on TDY, followed by private leave travel the length of Yugoslavia in early July--the fourth Yugoslavia visit by the present bureau chief. Fresh oysters and mussels were found to be outstanding and cheap at Mali Ston, north of Dubrovnik.

[redacted]
Chief, FBIS Austrian Bureau

Attachments:

Publishable Wordage Report
Production Report
Staff Personnel Report
Non-Staff Personnel Report
Newspaper and Journal Coverage List
Broadcast Coverage Schedule

cc: Chief, FBIS London Bureau